

Auschwitz-Birkenau in the collective memory, 75 years after liberation

The Auschwitz camp is a symbol of genocide committed by Germans during World War II. In 2005, the UN General Assembly established the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, and its date was set for January 27, the day when Soviet soldiers opened the gates of KL Auschwitz.

For more than a quarter of Poles, Auschwitz or other Nazi concentration and prisoner-of-war camps are part of the family history (for 27%, or for 21% if only concentration camps are included). Almost one-tenth of respondents (9%) declare that one of their relatives was a prisoner of Auschwitz, and four out of a hundred (4%) lost a family member there.

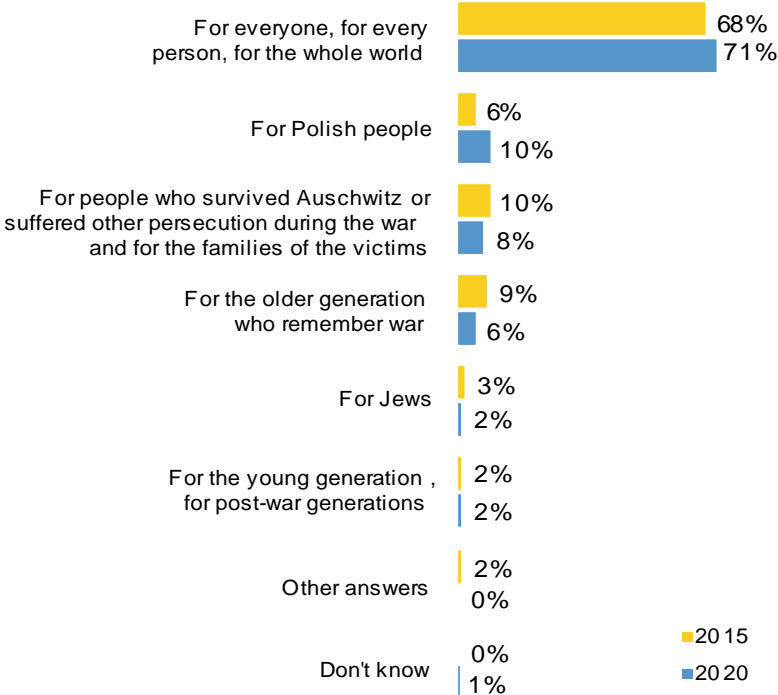
Was anyone from your family, relatives or people close to you:



The Auschwitz-Birkenau camp museum in Oświęcim was visited by over half of respondents (55%). The visitors were more often people for whom this place is associated with family history (someone close to them was a prisoner or died in Auschwitz-Birkenau) than others who did not have such mediated experiences (72% vs. 53%).

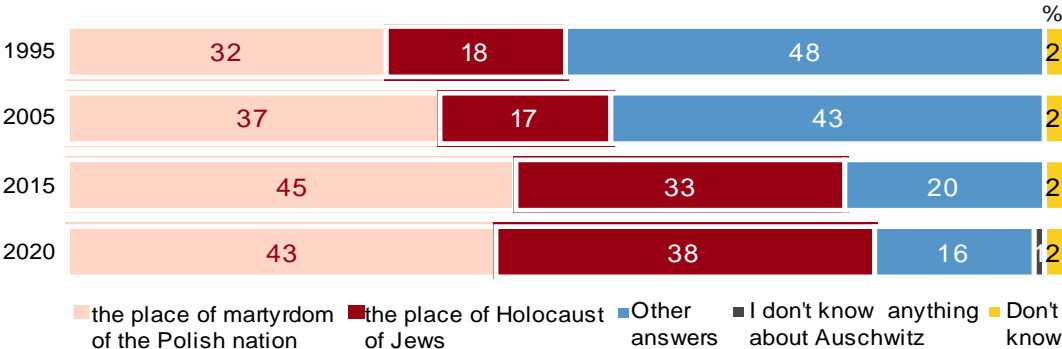
In the opinion of over seven-tenths (71%), the memory of Auschwitz is now of universal importance: it is important for every person, all over the world. One-tenth (10%) consider the memory of this largest Nazi camp as important mainly for Poles, and eight out of one hundred (8%) think it matters for those who were imprisoned there or experienced other persecutions during World War II and for the families of the victims. Slightly fewer (6%) emphasize the importance of remembrance of Auschwitz for the older generation who remember the war. Relatively few believe that it is important above all for Jews (2%) or for young, post-war generations (2%). Over the past five years, the belief in the universality of Auschwitz symbolism has strengthened, and at the same time there are more people pointing to its significance for Poles. However, there are fewer people who think that it belongs to the past and is important mainly for people who remember the war.

For whom is the memory of Oświęcim / Auschwitz important today?



The names "Oświęcim / Auschwitz" are primarily associated with the place of martyrdom of the Polish nation (43%), and slightly less often, with the Holocaust of Jews (38%). Taking into account the twenty-five-year perspective, it can be seen that more and more often this place is associated primarily with Holocaust of Jews.

**What do you primarily associate the word "Oświęcim / Auschwitz" with?
Is it primarily...**



Other associations formulated by the respondents with the words "Oświęcim / Auschwitz" usually refer to the place of martyrdom or extermination of both Jews and Poles (70%), many different nationalities (20%), or generally to destruction, tragedy, the crime of Nazism without distinguishing any nationality (11%).

More information about this topic can be found in CBOS report in Polish: "Auschwitz-Birkenau in Collective Memory – 75 Years after Liberation", January 2019. Fieldwork for national sample: January 2020, N=1016. The random address sample is representative for adult population of Poland.